

Where Were Civil War Forts Built? (Map Activity)

Subject: Social Studies

Duration: 45 minutes

Location: Classroom, Fort Donelson NB

Key Vocabulary: geography, map key, elevation, river, geographical feature, tributary

Related Activities: Read Benjamin F. Cooling's, *Forts Henry and Donelson: Key to the Confederate Heartland*

Standards:

National: S.S Strand III: People, Places, and Environment

State: Kentucky – S.S. 2.19

Tennessee – S.S. 5.03



Objectives. Students will a) become familiar with the geography of the Forts Henry and Donelson area, and b) gain an understanding of the importance of the geographic location for battlefield victory, and c) students will locate various sites of Civil War battles throughout the U.S. and identify the region in which they are found.

Materials

- United States map
- Map of Forts Henry and Donelson
- Map showing national Civil War battlefields and regions of the U.S.
- Brochure (see binder pockets)

Method. The students will find and label the location of the following:

Battlefields	Henry	Shiloh	Rivers	Cumberland	Tennessee	Red
	Donelson	Stones River		Ohio	Mississippi	
States	Heiman	Chattanooga	Cities	Dover, TN	Nashville, TN	Clarksville, TN
	Nashville	Franklin		Memphis, TN	Paducah, KY	Mayfield, KY
States	Kentucky	Missouri	Illinois	Murray, KY	Columbus, KY	Chattanooga, TN
	Tennessee	Arkansas		Savannah, TN	Corinth, MS	Franklin, TN
	Alabama	Georgia				

Background. During the Civil War (1861-1865), this young nation depended on its waterways to connect vast inland distances. Keelboats, flatboats, and steamboats offered a way to tap the wealth of the land by transporting goods and people. The waterways played a central role in the economic, cultural, and political life of America. Centers of trade from Pittsburgh to St. Louis to New Orleans with Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville, Memphis, and Natchez in between all came to life because waterways carried cotton, iron, tobacco, food stuffs, and manufactured goods. Soon railroads began to complement river traffic. The Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers played essential roles to both Confederate and Union troops during the war.

Suggested Procedure

1. Students should discuss why rivers were important to both Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War.
2. The rivers were the "interstates" of the 1860s period. Explain.
3. Locate Forts Henry and Donelson on a map. Both were located along major rivers, yet Fort Donelson repelled the gunboat attack, while Fort Henry fell quickly. What geographical feature made the difference?
4. Brainstorm and list ways that the rivers of the Civil War time period were used by not only the military, but by civilians (i.e., citizens of Dover, Tennessee, slaves escaping to freedom, deserters)

Evaluation

Discuss with students the importance of geographic location when building homes, businesses, and other specific sites.

Extension

On a road map have students trace routes to various Civil War battlefields. Use the map to determine the direction one would take if traveling there. Have students locate the battlefield that is the nearest and the longest distance from their school.